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Arrests Heighten Alarm at W. German Spy Danger

Major Security Breach Now Feared

By GEORGE THOMPSON

BONN, Germany (AP) — The arrest of two Germans suspected of spying heightened public alarm Saturday that, combined with the suicide or violent death of five government officials, there may have been a major breach of Western security in West Germany.

Police disclosed that Sgt. Maj. Wolf Diethard Knoppe, 33, a West German fighter pilot, was arrested Tuesday at a North Atlantic Treaty Organization base near Neuburg on suspicion he was involved in the theft of a Sidewinder air-to-air missile.

At the same time, informed sources said a woman secretary in the Defense Ministry had been arrested on suspicion of betraying secrets to the Communists. A Defense Ministry spokesman said no details about the arrest would be made public until the case had been fully investigated.

The Knoppe arrest was linked to the detention of Polish-born Josef Linowski also on Tuesday, on suspicion of being involved in the Sidewinder theft in October of last year. A police spokesman said Knoppe was suspected of stealing the 150-pound rocket and thrusting it under a fence at the air base, where accomplices picked it up.

ADMIRAL DEAD

The case attracting most attention is that of Rear Adm. Hermann Luedke, recently retired deputy head of NATO's logistic department, found shot with a hunting rifle in a forest in the Eifel Mountains Oct. 8.

This was 15 days after he was identified as the owner of a strip of microfilm containing shots of secret NATO documents.

Police and security men have discounted any links between these cases and the recent suicides of Maj. Gen. Horst Wendtland, deputy chief of federal intelligence; Lt. Col. Johannes Grimm, a security officer in the Defense Ministry, Hans-Heinrich Schenk, a senior officer in the Economics Ministry, and Edeltraud Grapentin, librarian in the federal press office.

Deputy chief government spokesman Conrad Ahlers called in reporters to deny that Mrs. Grapentin was unmasked as a Communist agent.

HEALTH BLAMED

The Suddenutsche Zeitung of Munich said she had been working for Communist East Germany's state security service. Ahlers said she killed herself with an overdose of sleeping tablets for personal reasons, presumably ill health. Ill health or fits of depression also have been blamed for the other suicides.

Rheinische Post of Duesseldorf, noting that the chain of deaths, arrests and disappearances had stirred "maximum concern" in Western capitals, said Luedke "may well have betrayed the deployment of American atomic weapons in Europe to the Soviets."

The Luedke case, now in the hands of the federal prosecutor in Karlsruhe, has brought on a row between military security officials, Bonn police, counterespionage organs and the federal prosecutor's office over claims that Luedke was allowed to slip away although under strong suspicion.

CLERK MISSING

Bonn police reported no progress in the countrywide search for Gerhard Boehm, 61-year-old Defense Ministry clerk who vanished last Monday after leaving suicide notes with his office and family. The government said he had no access to defense secrets.

But public alarm has been fired even further by the disclosure Friday that six Communist East German agents managed to escape out of West Germany earlier this month as the current scare began to break.

Added to this was the discovery last week of fragments of air to air Hawk missiles on a public refuse heap in the Eifel hills, and lack of an official explanation as to how they got there.

About 16,000 Communist agents are operating in this country at any given moment, the Interior Ministry reported.